



Charlotte Maintains Redevelopment Momentum



The Gaines Brown Design property prior to cleanup and redevelopment.

Charlotte, North Carolina

In Charlotte, North Carolina, a Brownfields Assessment Demonstration grant awarded by EPA in 1996 to target the city's Wilmore neighborhood and South End Business District led to the creation of nearly 1,000 jobs, and helped leverage more than \$37.5 million in cleanup and redevelopment funding. This total is expected to reach over \$60 million once Charlotte's ongoing redevelopment projects are completed.

The Brownfields Pilot's first major success was Camden Square, a mixed-use development now home to the Design Center of the Carolinas, a complex of three buildings that house architectural firms, graphics production companies, interior design firms, and other design-related endeavors. This project alone leveraged approximately \$14.5 million in redevelopment investments, and that number will increase as redevelopment expands to a separate project—Camden Square's Village East and Village West. Investment at this project is projected to reach \$49 million and to create an additional 750 jobs. Camden Square was the first project to fall under the state's Brownfields Property Reuse Act, which uses land use restrictions, risk-based cleanup standards, and liability protections to promote the redevelopment of brownfields.

Another Pilot success is the Gaines Brown Design Project, which focuses on a brownfield located in Charlotte's Wilmore neighborhood. The operator of an exhibit design business in the neighborhood had been looking to purchase this site adjacent to his property to renovate and lease to design-related businesses. Once the site of a radiator shop, the property was vacant for more than 10 years due in part to unknown levels of lead contamination in the soil. The Pilot used \$25,000 in grant funding to conduct an environmental assessment and design a cleanup plan. The assessment revealed that a portion of the site was in fact clean, enabling the operator to purchase that area of the property. The operator was later able to purchase the remaining portion of the parcel, demolish the former radiator shop, and remove the contaminated soil. Due to successful redevelopment of an office building across the street as well as a nearby 5-story condominium

JUST THE FACTS:

- In Charlotte, an EPA Brownfields Assessment Demonstration grant awarded in 1996 has led to the creation of nearly 1,000 jobs and helped leverage more than \$37.5 million in cleanup and redevelopment funding throughout the city.
- The \$14.5 million Design Center of the Carolinas now includes more than 100 design-related businesses and 500 employees.
- EPA-funded assessments of the Gaines Brown Design property indicated that it was clean, and in the future the property will likely include a \$3 to \$5 million redevelopment project.
- The former Westover Shopping Center is now City West Commons, which opened in September 2003 and created 150 new jobs.

"It's a great sign that outsiders are realizing what the potential is. ... My concern is that a lot of folks might sell without knowing what a gold mine they're sitting on."

**-City Council member
Patrick Cannon, The Charlotte
Observer, 7/12/98**

complex, a \$3 to \$5 million redevelopment project is probable for this property.

Another success for the Charlotte Brownfields Pilot is the City West Commons property, formerly the Westover Shopping Center. In 1991, the property was seized by the federal government due to illegal activities. The Pilot used \$20,000 to conduct an environmental assessment on the property, which concluded that contaminant levels were low enough for redevelopment to begin. The Pilot leveraged nearly \$200,000 for assessment and cleanup of the property as well as more than \$3 million for redevelopment activities. After a decade of planning to bring new development to the area, the newly constructed shopping center opened in September 2003 and created 150 new jobs. The new tenants include Family Dollar, Jackson-Hewitt Tax Service, a division of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, and a Southern cuisine cafeteria that has live gospel music every month.

Thanks to EPA's Brownfields Program, Charlotte has returned these formerly idle properties to enhancements for the city and provided much-needed employment opportunities in an area where 27 percent of residents live below the poverty line. As word of these successes has spread to the real estate and redevelopment communities, there has been a dramatic increase in the Wilmore neighborhood's marketability. Residents are now being inundated with offers to sell their properties. The Pilot was also awarded a \$100,000 supplemental assistance grant, which allowed the Pilot to expand its target area beyond the South End-Wilmore district to include all the of city's distressed neighborhoods.



*The completed Gaines Brown
Design Building.*

CONTACTS:

For more information contact
U.S. EPA REGION 4
(404) 562-9900

Visit the EPA Brownfields Web site at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>